



An **A-10 Thunderbolt II** pilot
safely landed her **“Warthog”**
after it sustained significant damage from
enemy fire

wounded
WARTHOG

By SSgt Jason Haag, Yongsan Army Garrison, ROK

An A-10 Thunderbolt II pilot, deployed with the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing, safely landed her “Warthog” at a forward operating base after it sustained significant damage from enemy fire during a close air support mission over Baghdad.

Capt Kim Campbell, deployed from the 75th Fighter Squadron at Pope Air Force Base, N.C., and her flight leader, Lt Col Richard Turner, had just finished supporting ground troops and were on their way out of the area when her aircraft was hit by enemy fire.

“We were very aware that it was a high-threat environment — we were over Baghdad,” Campbell said. “Those are the risks you take to help the guys on the ground. That’s our job; that’s what we do. Our guys were taking fire

feeling over Baghdad. It didn’t respond to any of my control inputs.”

The captain tried several different procedures to get the aircraft under control; none of which worked. At that point, she decided to put the plane into manual reversion, which meant she was flying the aircraft without hydraulics. After that, the aircraft immediately responded.

“The jet started climbing away from the ground, which was a good feeling because there was no way I wanted to eject over Baghdad,” she said.

Because the aircraft sustained hits to the rear of the aircraft, Campbell said she couldn’t see the damage. Her flight leader, Lt Col Turner, positioned his aircraft where he could view the damage, which included the horizontal stabi-

Her options, which ultimately came down to two: fly the aircraft to a safe area and eject, or attempt to land a broken jet

and we want to do everything we can to help them out. We did our job with the guys there on the ground, and as we were on our way out is when I felt the jet get hit. It was pretty obvious — it was loud.”

After sustaining the hit, she said the aircraft immediately became uncontrollable, and the entire caution panel lit up with warnings — not the best scenario over hostile territory.

“I lost all hydraulics instantaneously, and the jet rolled left and pointed toward the ground, which was an uncomfortable

lizer, tail section and engine cowlings.

“The jet was flying pretty good, and the damage had not affected the flight control surfaces or the [landing] gear,” Turner said. “If [Kim] could keep it flying, we would get out of Baghdad and might be able to make it.”

Once they assessed the situation, the two worked closely together to determine the best course of action. Campbell said the colonel’s calm demeanor and attention to detail were instrumental in



▲ Above: Capt Campbell surveys the battle damage to her airplane.

her being able to get the airplane home.

“I could not have asked for a better flight lead,” she said. “He was very directive when he needed to be because all I could concentrate on was flying the jet. Then, once we were out of the Baghdad area, [he] just went through all the checklists, all the possibilities, all the things I needed to take into account.”

Campbell said she and Turner discussed all her options, which ultimately came down to two: fly the aircraft to a safe area and eject, or attempt to land a broken jet.

“She had a big decision to make,” he said. “Before anyone else could throw their two-cents worth into the mix, I made sure that she knew that the decision to land or eject was hers and hers alone.”

To Campbell, the decision was clear.

“The jet was performing exceptionally well,” she said. “I had no doubt in my mind I was going to land that airplane.”

After getting the aircraft on the ground, the final task was getting it stopped and keeping it on the runway.

“When you lose all the hydraulics, you don’t have speed brakes, you don’t have brakes, and you don’t have steering,” Campbell said.

Nonetheless, she brought the A-10 home safely, and it did the same for her.

“One of the really cool things was that when I did touch down, I heard several comments on the radio — like, ‘Awesome job! Great landing!’ Campbell said. “I guess we all think we are invincible and it won’t happen to us. I hadn’t been shot at — at all — in any of my other missions. This was the first. Thank God for the Warthog, because it took some damage, but it got me home.” ▶



▶ Right: Capt Campbell and her flight lead Lt Col Turner, photographed after landing her battle damaged aircraft